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Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Letter dated 3 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to convey that the Government of India has decided to nominate Mr. Shashi Tharoor to the post of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Tharoor, an Indian national, has served the United Nations since 1978. In January 2001, he was appointed as interim Head of the Department of Public Information. On 1 June 2002, he was confirmed as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information of the United Nations. A biographical note on Mr. Shashi Tharoor is attached (see annex).

India strongly supports the principle of geographical rotation under which the next Secretary-General of the United Nations should be from Asia. We also believe that a prospective United Nations Secretary-General should have impeccable credentials, be acceptable to the broadest possible membership of the United Nations and have a strong commitment to the reform of the United Nations and the interests of the developing countries.

I would be grateful if consultations could be facilitated and Member States as well as the Security Council informed, in accordance with paragraph 60 of General Assembly resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997, and the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Nirupam **Sen**

* A/61/50 and Corr.1.

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Annex to the letter dated 3 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Shashi Tharoor

Biographical note

Shashi Tharoor is currently United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and has led the Department of Public Information since January 2001. In this capacity, he has led the reform of one of the larger departments in the Secretariat, with some 750 staff and field offices in 63 countries around the world.

At the Secretary-General's request, in January 2001 Mr. Tharoor accepted what was initially intended as a temporary assignment as interim Head of the widely criticized Department of Public Information. His hands-on leadership of that Department and the initiation of far-reaching reforms led the Secretary-General to confirm him as Under-Secretary-General in 2002. As head of the Department, Mr. Tharoor has:

- Transformed what was seen as an ineffective and bureaucratic department, weighed down by a plethora of General Assembly mandates, into a focused, streamlined and results-oriented centre of excellence;
- Become the first Secretariat leader to successfully close down United Nations offices, by shutting down eight United Nations Information Centres in Western Europe in the face of considerable political and bureaucratic opposition;
- Devised a new and clear mission statement for his staff, conceived a new operating model for the Department and reorganized its functioning, including eliminating non-essential functions and services;
- Vastly improved coordination within the United Nations system and across departments, funds, programmes and agencies in the dissemination of public information, notably through the establishment of an inter-agency United Nations Communications Group; and
- Set new standards in results-based management and the creation of a culture of evaluation, establishing an Annual Programme Impact Review for all managers in the Department that requires them to produce reports on the measurable effectiveness of their products and services (this has now been adopted as a model for the rest of the Organization).

In this capacity, Mr. Tharoor has also served on the Senior Management Group, the Policy Committee, the Task Force on Iraq, the Steering Committee on Reform and Management and the Working Group on post-cold war security. Bilingual in English and French, he was appointed United Nations Coordinator for Multilingualism in 2003.

Prior to this assignment, Mr. Tharoor served as the Director of Communications and Special Projects in the Office of the Secretary-General (1997-2001) and as a senior advisor to the Secretary-General. In this role he:

- Advised the Secretary-General on a number of strategic issues and undertook sensitive assignments, including accompanying him on official missions abroad and monitoring the performance of various United Nations offices and departments on behalf of the Secretary-General;

- Served on various working groups and task forces on institutional reform and organizational strategy;

- Oversaw the opening up of the Organization to public scrutiny, through the issuance of new guidelines for dealing with the media, and

- Devised and led the Communications Group, an effective vehicle for coordinating information-sharing across the United Nations system.

- His previous assignment at United Nations Headquarters in New York was as Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations (1989-1996). In this eventful period:

- From 1991 to 1996, he led the team in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations responsible for the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia — travelling frequently to the region to oversee the work of the field missions and negotiate with leaders on all sides of the conflict, managing the Headquarters political and military staff assigned to these missions, attending daily Security Council meetings on the issue in order to send policy guidance to the field, drafting reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, liaising daily with Member States as the situation evolved, managing relations with NATO and leading the Task Force on the former Yugoslavia;

- He worked with two successive heads of United Nations peacekeeping operations in managing the challenges of unprecedented growth and evolution in peacekeeping at the end of the cold war, serving as Chief of Staff for the Department of Peacekeeping, supervising issues of budget, staffing and administration, and overseeing the plans for the expansion of the Department and its merger with the Field Operations Division; and

- He supervised the staff working on the evolution of peacekeeping policy and strategic issues, articulating a new vision of United Nations peacekeeping principles and practices in the changed global environment, and set up the nucleus of what has since become the Lessons Learned and Best Practices Units.

Mr. Tharoor's United Nations career began in 1978 on the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva. He was assigned as Head of the UNHCR office in Singapore (1981-1984) during the peak of the Vietnamese "boat people" crisis. Among his significant accomplishments in this role, he:

- Oversaw a reduction in the refugee caseload by over 80 per cent, principally through greater success in resettlement through a variety of innovative and creative methods;

- Played a leading role in devising creative solutions to a number of problems relating to refugees rescued at sea, including those related to refugees rescued by ships flying flags of convenience and those belonging to developing countries;

- Administered the refugee camp, introducing new practices of camp management through refugee elections of their own leaders; and

- Handled discreetly and successfully several non-Vietnamese refugee cases, including the first Polish refugees after the declaration of martial law in December 1981 and the first group of Acehnese who sought to enter Singapore surreptitiously. These problems were solved without publicity and without creating international embarrassment — notably the case of a Polish seaman who jumped ship and took refuge on board a United States destroyer, nearly sparking off a diplomatic crisis between Singapore and the United States of America which Mr. Tharoor defused.

Success in Singapore brought him back to UNHCR Headquarters as Deputy Chief of the Secretariat, a unit dealing with relations between UNHCR and Governments, in particular with the UNHCR Executive Committee. He then became the organization's first-ever Executive Assistant to the Deputy High Commissioner, a role in which he helped the Deputy High Commissioner devise and implement a new approach to coordinating the organization's various operational activities worldwide.

Mr. Tharoor is the award-winning author of nine books, as well as numerous articles and op-ed pieces in a wide range of publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *International Herald Tribune* and *Newsweek*. His books and essays include:

- *Reasons of State*, a study of Indian foreign-policy making;

- *India From Midnight to the Millennium*, widely hailed as one of the best books ever written on contemporary India and cited by President Clinton in his address to the Indian Parliament;

- "Are Human Rights Universal?", a rejection of arguments against the universality of human rights, published in the *World Policy Journal*;

- "Should Peacekeeping Go Back to Basics?", published in *Survival* at the end of the first post-Cold War phase of United Nations peacekeeping, analysing the challenges facing United Nations peacekeeping in the new era;

- "The Role of the Secretary-General", an analysis of the opportunities and limitations of the job of Secretary-General of the United Nations, published by the Swedish Government on the occasion of the centenary of Dag Hammarskjöld; and

- "Why America Still Needs the United Nations", published in *Foreign Affairs* in the fall of 2003, just after the Iraq war, arguing the case for continued United States engagement with the United Nations.

Born in London in 1956, Mr. Tharoor was educated in India and the United States, completing a Ph.D. in 1978 at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where he received the Robert B. Stewart Prize for Best Student. At Fletcher, Shashi Tharoor helped found and was the first editor of the *Fletcher Forum of International Affairs*, a journal now in its thirty-first year.

In January 1998, Mr. Tharoor was named by the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, as a "Global Leader of Tomorrow". He is the recipient of several awards, including a Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and was named to India's

highest honour for overseas Indians, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, in 2004. He serves on the Board of Overseers of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, the board of trustees of the Aspen Institute India, and the Advisory Board of the World Policy Journal. He is also a Fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities.

Shashi Tharoor is the father of twin sons, who are undergraduates at Yale University.